United Nations A/56/231

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 September 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session

Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifty-sixth session

United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, 2002

Letter dated 20 September 2001 from the Permanent Representatives of Canada, China, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, the Russian Federation, Spain and Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

At the request of our respective Governments, we have the honour to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-sixth session of an additional item entitled "United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, 2002".

Pursuant to rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, kindly find attached herewith an explanatory memorandum on the matter.

(*Signed*) Paul **Heinbecker**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Canada

(*Signed*) **Wang** Yingfan
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of China

(*Signed*) Ahmed **Aboul Gheit**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Egypt

(*Signed*) Hadi **Nejad Hosseinian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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(*Signed*) Sergio **Vento**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Italy

(*Signed*) Mohamed A. **Abulhasan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Kuwait

(*Signed*) Sélim **Tadmoury**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Lebanon

(*Signed*) Mohamed **Bennouna**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Morocco

(*Signed*) Sergey V. **Lavrov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation

(*Signed*) Inocencio F. **Arias**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Spain

(*Signed*) Felipe **Paolillo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Uruguay

Annex

Explanatory memorandum

United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, 2002

1. A major mission entrusted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) by its constitution is the protection, safeguarding and enhancement of the world's heritage. The Organization has unanimously adopted one of the beliefs which emerged during the twentieth century, namely, a common heritage for all humankind, regardless of its geographical position. This notion brings about a drive for change, openness and progress, since it not only encompasses cultural and natural heritage but also tangible and intangible heritage.

2. For decades, a global plan of action has been implemented by UNESCO. As testimony to this, the following can be mentioned: great international campaigns; operational projects to safeguard cultural and natural sites in various countries; the development of museums; and international conventions such as the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954 and its two Protocols, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property of 1970, the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972, and the Recommendation on the safeguarding of traditional culture and folklore of 1989.

3. The World Heritage Convention, ratified by 164 States parties, includes 690 world cultural and natural heritage sites and has given a strong impulse to the growing awareness concerning both the cultural and the economic importance of the protection and enhancement of those heritage sites.

4. Important, concrete and visible achievements have been implemented for the benefit of humankind through the tangible support of Member States, the cooperation of other United Nations organizations and programmes (United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Trade Organization, United Nations Volunteers, International Labour Organization and others), the World Bank and other financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, public and private partners and the international community.

5. Proclaiming 2002 the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage would coincide with the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. This would support calls for international mobilization and give greater impetus to all activities linked with heritage, as well as the implementation of international conventions, operational projects and awareness-raising actions, training and revitalization. A common living heritage will contribute to the economic and social development of local populations and to a more concerted effort of the United Nations agencies. It will increase mobilization of Member States, reinforce exchanges, increase technical and financial support and develop concrete actions which will contribute to the role played by heritage in economic development, the fight against poverty and peace-building.